

Philippians 4:1-3

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[0:00] Well, good morning. As Kyle just said, my name is Dave, if I've not met you.

! I'm one of Shoreline's pastors or elders, and I am indeed returning to our series after a one-week hiatus for Easter in the book of Philippians. So if you have a Bible, I invite you to turn with me to Philippians chapter 4.

And as you do, I'll give you two other quick updates. Thank you for your prayers for Dave Moynihan this week in his illnesses. The doctors found the issue and worked to correct it.

Last I heard was yesterday he was heading home. I haven't spoken to them this morning, but I think he is home and resting. Yes, okay, cool. And then, so praise the Lord for that. And Dave has been leading so much of our location search.

And so the news on that is we kind of got our ducks in a row over the last two weeks and prepped a very low ball offer for this weekend, which we expect will be rejected.

[1:13] But, you know, we want to conserve the Lord's resources as best we can. So that's the update on that as well. So when I am asked to officiate a wedding, I meet with the couple several times.

One of those, we're planning the ceremony. Most of them, it's premarital counseling. And one thing that I always tell them is that barring exceptional circumstances, your spouse, by cumulative effect, will be the person who harms you most in your life.

And vice versa. I am an incurable romantic. I actually am. Never mind. Today, why am I talking about this in the midst of Philippians?

And Philippians, let's just think through where we have come. In chapter 1, Paul says he's thankful for the Philippian Christians, just for them.

He loves them. And he is grateful for their assistance in his ministry. They are financially supporting him out of their poverty. And he assures them that even in his imprisonment, God is not handcuffed.

[2:30] He is able to still produce his mission in his world. And the gospel is not stifled or hedged in or anything like that. In chapter 2, he reminded them of Christ's mindset for them.

We'll be revisiting that in a moment here today. How he humbled himself, even to the point of crucifixion, and encouraged them to have that same attitude towards one another.

In chapter 3, he reminded them to stand firm on the gospel of grace. No matter what winds of false doctrine came their way, or self-effort specifically.

And he showed them that one way to draw closer to God, to draw near to God, was through the path, interestingly, of obedience.

It was a little bit of heaven on earth. And today, as we step into chapter 4, Paul turns his attention, and ours, to a conflict among two members of the Philippian church.

[3:32] It doesn't seem like that next natural step, to me at least. But as we'll see, what he's going to do here, in the first, just, we're looking at only the first three verses of Philippians chapter 4.

So it'll probably be a very long, no, I'm kidding, sermon. He's going to draw on all those things that have come before. And he's going to use them in a practical circumstance, a conflict within the church, and he's going to use all of those things.

As we'll see, he's not going to just say, like, the way the world talks about conflict, like, let's meet in the middle somewhere. He's going to do something totally different to manage a conflict within the church.

And as Jesus said, blessed are the peacemakers. This will make us peacemakers, as we rely on what he has done, if we will walk in it.

And so, Philippians chapter 4, beginning in verse 1, we read, Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

[4:48] I entreat Iodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Let's pray real quick. Lord, as we come to your word, will you speak to us?

Will you change us? By the word of your power, that we might be peacemakers, as Christ has taught us to be, and as Paul models for us today.

As we walk in the footsteps of you, the God who made peace between heaven and earth. We ask it in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. What's the big picture in those three verses? In verse two, we see that there are two women in the Philippian church, Iodia and Syntyche.

[6:04] They are disagreeing about something. What it is, we don't know. But evidently, it was big enough, an issue, that word of it had reached Paul in his imprisonment in Rome.

And he saw that as a good opportunity to put into practice, practically, everything that he's just said in the first three chapters of the book of Philippians.

So this isn't like Paul's mind wandering off after he's talking about all these glorious things. He's like, oh yeah, by the way, you guys agree. That's not what's going on here. He's putting everything that's come before into practice in a circumstance that is relevant to them immediately.

And so before we wade into his wise counsel here, it's important for us to make a few clarifications about what he's not saying.

Because oftentimes, we can assume certain things that actually aren't in the text. So there are a couple things that I might wrongly assume are here, and they aren't.

[7:12] So he is not saying, like, the truths of Scripture don't matter. Like, don't worry about, you know, doctrinal differences. Just get along. Right? He just spent the whole first half of chapter three saying that getting the gospel clear is absolutely critical.

Without it, there is no church. Right? Elsewhere, he says in Galatians chapter one, even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preach to you, let him be accursed.

Right? So he's not saying, this can't be like a doctrinal difference, at least at the level of core doctrines of the church. He also is not talking about wrongdoing here.

Right? This is a disagreement, not someone sinning against someone else. This is a scenario where they have some matter. We don't know whether it's, we just don't know what it is.

But it is not a situation where one of them has sinned against the other. Right? If a husband beats his wife and she responds to him angrily, that has nothing to do with this.

[8:20] There are a completely different set of biblical guidelines that govern that, up to and including calling the police and exercising church discipline. Third, there is no indication here that Paul thinks that Euodia and Syntyche are immature.

I've heard some people call them childish or foolish or refer to their dispute as a petty squabble. But he doesn't say any of that in verses one through three at all.

He doesn't treat them like petulant children. He says, in fact, that they have been his own co-laborers in the gospel, that their names are written in the book of life. Far from calling them childish, Paul holds them in high regard.

He's concerned for them. He's not scolding them. John Calvin put it this way. He said, Also, when he says agree, here's another thing that we might wrongly think about this passage.

And this one's pretty important, I think. When he says agree, literally it says, think the same. We are not intended to understand that as be identical to one another.

[9:51] Christians do not need to be carbon copies. The world needs no more of me. You know, yeah. The agreement that Christians have with one

another rests at a higher level than the dispute, essentially.

And we know this because Paul has shown us elsewhere what it looks like to think the same in matters that are disputed. Being united in the gospel, even with our differences, is the goal. Not to have every single thing, right, like we can dislike, I can like a dish that you dislike, and you can like cats, even though that's wrong.

In the first century, right, the Christians were much closer to both the Jewish food laws and to the Greco-Roman practice of in the marketplace.

Many times the food, like meat, was sacrificed to idols and then sold. And so there were differences of opinion in the church on what Christians could or should eat.

[11:04] Paul actually didn't care too much as long as they came to an agreement that that secondary issue didn't dislodge the first thing, their worship, their mission, their fellowship together.

In Romans chapter 14, he addresses it head on. This is him encouraging them to think the same about something they disagree on. He says, As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.

One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains. And let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls, and he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day observes it in honor of the Lord.

[12:13] The one who eats eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God. Well, the one who abstains abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.

For if we live, we live to the Lord. And if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

That's what it looks like to agree in the Lord. Differences of opinion didn't disrupt or dislodge the unity of Christ's church because Christ's people had the mind of Christ towards one another.

I like how one writer put it in this Romans 14 passage. Paul didn't instruct them to come to the same conviction, but exhorts them to glorify the Lord with one voice in the midst of their disagreement.

And so, similarly, in Philippians 4, verse 2, Paul doesn't require them to have complete agreement in all matters. Rather, Paul wants us to come to an agreement that our differences on secondary things won't rupture our fellowship and our mission.

[13:38] So that's what isn't in this passage. He isn't saying that it's okay to disagree about central matters of importance. Chapter 3 shows us that. This is not a dispute about someone's wrongdoing.

This is a dispute, a disagreement, not a sin thing. They are not childish and foolish. They might be, but there's no indication that they are. And he does not require complete uniformity.

Instead, he's looking for a higher kind of unity, even in disagreement. So that's what isn't there.

What we do see is, yes, there is a disagreement between Christians and Paul urges them to be reconciled based on all that we have seen so far.

And he does it. I'm going to pull out five things. The first two are kind of longer than the rest, so if you're trying to gauge, you know, when lunch is or whatever, just be warned.

I'm going to point out five things that he is relying on that come from the body of the rest of this book that help them come to a God-glorifying resolution to their conflict.

[14:53] And the first thing he says is agree or think the same in the Lord. And in fact, he begins verse one, stand firm, thus, in the Lord.

And then it says think the same in the Lord. And if we were hearing this letter read all at once, this would immediately remind us of what he's already said in chapter two.

In chapter two, verse five, he says, have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, in the Lord. What mind is he talking about in the Lord there?

Well, he explained it quite clearly to them. Philippians two, verse one, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

[16:07] And then he says, verse five, that that mind, that mindset is yours in the Lord. So in the midst of, excuse me, disagreement, what mind does my nature lead me towards?

How about you? What mind does the culture around me lead me towards? Right? That's the theme of like every Disney movie, right, is follow your path, right?

What does the mind of Christ lead me towards? The mind of Christ who, verse six, thought, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant.

Being born in the likeness of man and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Brad was up here earlier talking about the book God's Big Picture, how there are lots of episodes in the Bible, but they are all part of one grand narrative.

This is the climax of that, is it not? And if this is really the big picture of history, I hope, I desire, I so hope that it becomes the grand narrative of my life, into which all of my disputes, into which all of my hopes and dreams fit.

[17:52] If I have that order wrong, if my hopes and dreams are chief, and this is something I add on like a side dish, I've missed the point entirely of my own life.

If it becomes the grand narrative, the master story of my life, suddenly all these things begin falling into place. And that's what Paul is saying here, that this mindset is ours in Christ.

That attitude of humility and honoring the other is the first step then of redeeming conflict.

Second, we see Paul's own example of love for the people of God. Look at verse 1. Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

That's six expressions of affection. I don't think I've ever fit that many in one sentence for my wife. My brothers, and this is in the Greco-Roman context, that's brothers and sisters.

[19:08] My brothers and sisters, one, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown and then he finishes it off with my beloved again.

Where is your joy located? Paul's joy is located in these people. Where is your joy?

And where is your wealth found? is your wealth found in a bank account or an investment account? Or, like Paul, is it found in people?

Are people your riches? C.S. Lewis wrote a book called The Great Divorce. Contrary to the title, it has nothing to do with marriage or a marriage dissolving.

It's the great divide between heaven and hell. It is a fictitious imagining. It's his imagining of people coming up basically to the gates of heaven and all of the things that they would desire beyond what's there and how it keeps them from true joy.

[20:36] It's an excellent short read. It will expose idols in your heart. I recommend it. The way his imagining works here, again, it's completely fictitious.

This is not how heaven works, but there are people who have already entered heaven are coming out of the gates to welcome people and invite them in and they don't want to.

Most of them don't want to go in because they are clinging to something and it's not like they're clinging to desperately evil things. Some are, but others are clinging to things that are just like, why would you care about that that's so petty now when you're faced with joy?

He describes one of the people coming out to invite, it was her husband, I believe, who is fighting against joy as hard as he can is the way that Lewis puts it. He describes her as she comes out and so the narrator is someone who is on this journey and he has a guide with him.

Some kind of procession was approaching us and the light came from the persons who composed it. On the left and right at each side of the forest avenue came youthful shapes, boys upon the one hand and girls upon the other.

[22:01] If I could remember their singing and write down the notes no man who read that score would ever grow sick or old. Between them went musicians and after these a lady in whose honor all this was being done.

He tries to remember her clothing and he says but I have forgotten and only partly do I remember the unbearable beauty of her face.

Is it, is it, I whispered to my guide, not at all? He said, it's someone you'll have never heard of. Her name on earth was Sarah Smith and she lived in Golders Green.

She seems to be well a person of particular importance. Aye, she is one of the great ones. You've heard that fame in this country and fame on earth are two quite different things.

Lewis' description of her goes on. her beauty is eclipsed by and actually the beauty that he can see is actually a radiation, a reflection of the beauty of her character.

[23:14] What's on display, what's visible outwardly is the greatness of how God has perfected her. so it's not her wealth or stature or style or looks, the things that the world regards.

Her great beauty is an outflow of her great heart and in heaven the Lord has completed his work in her. All her compassion and hospitality and love have grown to their full measure and are luminous. Now this is just one man's dream of the perfected state but I don't think he's far off the mark. And so friends, in a few short years when you close your eyes one final time we will see differently.

like he was saying we will value things differently. Possessions and status and position and all things like that will be a memory, will be monopoly money and we will value one another, men and women made in the image of God that we now see but then we will see them perfected by their maker for all time and we will see what is truly valuable and we will place it first.

It won't occur to me to place my preferences over someone like Sarah Smith. That's what's happening in verse one.

[25:13] Paul is already seeing them as they will be and he doesn't have enough words to express it. I love those words, the last ones, my joy and my crown.

Paul's treasures can't be stored in a bank or hung on a wall. It lives and in Christ it lives forever. May we have eyes to see that a person with whom we are in conflict is so much more valuable than whatever it is we are disagreeing about.

Conflict often rises when this priority gets flipped. Objects or possessions become more important than the true treasure. People in every interaction in every interaction that you and I have the person is the priority.

Next, what does he call these women? He says that they have labored side by side with me in the gospel. He says that they are counted among his fellow workers.

[26:47] He says that their names are written in the book of life. He's declaring who they are. This is a statement of identity.

And I wonder, is my identity, when I walk into some sort of conflict, is my identity a gospel worker whose name is in the book of life, or is my identity because of my sin or because of my foolishness? Someone who wants to get my way. Okay. Because if my identity is gospel worker, if my identity is my name is in the book of life, I'm going to think about things quite a bit differently.

Paul is reminding them here, trying to broaden their focus. Conflict has a way of really narrowing our view. he's showing them the bigger picture.

Right? You aren't the person, like you are not the person who wants this. You are the person who wants the globe to know the name of Jesus Christ. Your identity is not get my way.

[28:10] Your identity is I already have something better than anything I could achieve for myself because my name is written in the book of life. Not only that, but he also ties them together.

They are both workers of the same gospel. They have a history together. It's interwoven with others that they've walked alongside, worked alongside Paul and Clement and the others.

So what do we have in common? We have so much in common. This disagreement is probably much smaller than that. Sometimes you'll see two athletes on the same team not knowing that they're both going for the ball at the same time.

Thinking that guy in my periphery is the opponent. And you hear someone yelling same team same team. That's what Paul's doing here. As he says you're both my fellow workers.

You're on the same team. This other thing. This smaller thing. Let it be. And in fact verse three he says yoke fellow worker or something like that.

[29:28] It's yoke fellow pulling in the same direction. We don't know who he's talking about in verse three about who he's saying the faithful friend to help them along.

it could be Epaphroditus is my guess. He's the person carrying the letter. It's just a guess. He's obviously signaling to an individual in the church who is going to help them.

Which is another thing that he gives to them as a way of helping resolve conflict. It's the people of God. Yes, I ask you also true companion verse three.

That's the yoke fellow true companion. Help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life.

And so again he's drawing them together putting them on the same team again. I like how one writer put it every true Christian is!

[30:36] to!! the other. The world waits to believe until the disciples of Jesus are one. How long shall we keep them waiting?

But he also recruits their help. Now verse three does not give you license to make everybody's business in the church your business.

But it does place a responsibility for peacemaking on the church. We can balance that. You can encourage someone to come to a resolution of conflict.

You can be a peacemaker without actually even knowing what they're disputing. I see that things are hard between you two right now. I want to encourage you to seek reconciliation.

I want to remind you that you're on the same team. I'm praying for you. How can you take one step towards peace?

[31:46] Or whatever this disagreement's about, is it actually something that you need to come to a resolution on? Like, think back to Romans chapter 14. Or can you dwell peaceably together?

Can you agree in the Lord that your differences won't hamper your love for each other and your ministry alongside each other? So friends, there are ways of being very peaceably peacemakers among the people of God.

Last, the last thing that I'll mention. I think there's more here, but one more thing. It has to do with, again, the scale and the scope. Verse one begins with therefore.

before. It points back, obviously, then, to what's just come before. And what has just come before. The last thing Paul basically says in chapter 3 is that our citizenship is in heaven.

In a dispute, in a disagreement with someone, what are you looking for? What are you hoping to gain? It can't be more than what you already have in Christ.

[33:09] It just can't be. Because your citizenship is in heaven, where the streets are paved in gold. Whatever this thing is, right, in the book of Hebrews, we see people who are joyful for the loss of their property for the sake of the gospel, because it's not worth comparing, Paul says, to the glory that is going to be revealed among the people of God.

It's not worth comparing. And then the last words of this passage, verse 3, that their names are all written in the book of life.

it points us way past this. Parents of young kids, do your children remember what they were fighting about yesterday?

You know they were, but do they even remember, do you even remember what it was about? That's kind of what this does for us. right?

When I say this isn't worth caring about, you won't even remember this tomorrow. Paul is saying when we've been there 10,000 years, bright shining as the sun.

[34:38] Will you remember this? Will you remember this? So maybe we ask ourselves, will I care about this in 10,000 years?

Those are five things that I wanted to draw out of these few verses as Paul encourages these two believers to put into practice all that he's said before, all that has led up to this point.

He is now making practical the truths that he has been explaining to them. And as we do that, as we just pull out those things, as we think about them, let's stem back one step from it and ask, those

are five things that change the way we view ourselves and view disputes, view conflict one from the other.

What are all of those? What unites them all? As I said at the outset, they are not simply strategies for solving conflict.

It's certainly not like the world thinks of it. Right? This is not let's split the difference. It's way beyond that. It's not, all right, you get your way this time and I'll decide next time.

[36:09] It's not like that. It's not even like the more, you know, kind of more advanced negotiation strategies. You know, you'll learn in, you know, an MBA program like looking for win-wins or expanding the pie, those kinds of things, right?

The methods that Paul is signaling to us here in Philippians chapter 4 all depend on something vastly bigger than let's split the difference or expand the pie.

right? All of this depends on how Christ has made us his own by his death and his resurrection.

That he has reconciled us to himself and therefore to one another. That we are being conformed to his likeness.

That we have a hope in heaven and eternal life and an inheritance. All of this depends on the miraculous. These are not normal conflict strategies.

[37:22] So as we conclude, all of this depends on God and his grace. We are leaning on another in order to put these into practice.

It points us back to him. As we, as Christians, make peace among ourselves by these miraculous expectations, that's what they are, expectations that God has and will do what he has said.

We are signaling then to our own hearts, to those around us, and to a watching world that we believe these miracles are true, that Christ is risen.

We make peace because of the supernatural, not because we can split the difference. It's an act of faith and an act of worship to make peace in this way.

And so it all depends, it all depends. You can't make peace like this unless you have already been bought by Christ. And so if there's anyone here today who has not cast themselves on Christ, look to him for their salvation.

[38:49] We just celebrated Good Friday and Easter last week. The thing that stood between us and him was our sin. We stood guilty before a holy God. It was not possible for us to pay for that crime.

And so he took on flesh in order to do just that on our behalf. If we repent and believe in him, he will put us in Christ as we were talking about earlier today.

And then all of these things can be true of you. And then you can be a peacemaker just like your Lord has made peace between heaven and earth.

To him be the glory. Let's pray. Amen. Lord, we ask that you would help us to stand firm in the Lord as you've commanded because we aren't standing firm in or for our own way.

But Lord, help us to trust you that so much more, so much better awaits us in our risen Savior, Jesus Christ, who made a way and who is our great reward.

[40:25] We ask these things in his name and for his sake. Amen.